

Ninel Cherevko With Her Father Grigory Shwartz And Mother Clara Shwartz



My father Grigory Shwartz, I, and my mother Clara Shwartz. Photo made in Moscow in 1930 before I went to school. In 1922 my father finished a short-term training course and was sent to work at the Central Committee of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union]. He became an economist at the department of employment for young people. My parents were accommodated in a big apartment building for governmental officials in the very center of Moscow - besides apartments and blocks of a hostel type there were governmental offices of members of Parliament. There was only a bed, a wardrobe and a table and chairs in my parents' room left by former tenants of the room. There was a huge common kitchen on our floor, but my mother often cooked on a kerosene stove in our room. I was born on 11 August 1923. The first years in Moscow were very difficult. Although my father worked in the Central Committee he received a small salary. Besides, my father didn't hold a high position. My mother didn't go to work for some time after I was born. However, my parents had bright memories about this period of life. It was the time of hope when they were young and full of ideas about construction of a new society expecting only good things in life. Shortly after I was born my mother entered a preparatory course at the institute of Public Economy. After finishing this course she became a student of the Institute. My parents loved each other dearly, but they never demonstrated their feelings - this wasn't decent in their circles. My father traveled a lot and my mother always missed him, but when he returned she just kissed him on his cheek asking him whether he managed to complete his task. My father was a cheerful and hot-tempered man. He grabbed me throwing me high to the ceiling tickling and kissing me. We spent every summer vacation with my grandparents in Evpatoria. There were no Jewish holidays in summer and we didn't see any religious demonstrations of our grandparents. We liked the food that our grandmother made without giving it a thought whether it was kosher or non-kosher food. Our grandfather prayed in privacy and the children didn't care about what he was doing there. They didn't impose their way of life on us and we enjoyed staying with them. In 1926 my mother became a member of the Communist Party, she always wanted to join the Party and be in the first rows of builders of communism. She prepared very thoroughly for an interview in at the district

party committee studying works of classics of Marxism-Leninism. To join the Party applicants were to take an exam in front of commission of party officials that asked them questions about the history of the Party, biography of its founders, names of secretaries and other officials, etc. In this same year my father got a promotion - he began to work at the people's Commissariat (Ministry) for Labor. We received two rooms in a communal apartment in Smolenskaya Street, near Arbat in the very center of the city. There were 12 other families residing in this apartment. There was a common kitchen where each family had a table and a kerosene stove, and there was a common sink and a tap with water and a common toilet. Tenants stood in line to get to the toilet in the morning. We got along very well and I don't remember any arguments about anything that was common for other communal apartments. Children played together. We played 'hide and seek' running along the corridor and dropping in our neighbors' rooms. Our neighbors offered us tea and sweets. Neighbors often looked after each other's children when their parents had to go out. In 1928 my mother graduated from the Institute of Public Economy named after Plekhanov, and went to work. I went to a kindergarten not far from Arbat. We celebrated Soviet holidays with our neighbors: 1 May, 7 November and I remember the New Year of 1928. My father bought a huge Christmas tree it and my parents arranged a celebration for all children of our communal apartment in our room. There were presents under the Tree and treatments on the table: sweets and lemonade. My father disguised as Ded Moroz [Santa Claus], greeted and danced with us. We enjoyed ourselves a lot. This was the first and the last New Year celebration in my prewar childhood - the Soviet authorities cancelled Christmas trees calling them vestige of the past and apart of religious holiday.